

An Apology for the Sentiment of the Modalists; and a Defence of the Scriptural Terms.

TO defend the Doctrines of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation* requires not many Arguments, when these matters are rightly taken; for in order to vindicate them, they need only be represented and put into a true light. As for the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, it has been sufficiently clear'd, even in the Pamphlet intitled, *The Consequences of the Modalists System*, p. 8, &c. For there these Remarks are made concerning it. The Divine *Intellect*, or Mind and Understanding, is the Cause of the Divine *Wisdom*; and from both the Divine *Intellect* and the Divine *Wisdom* doth proceed the Divine *Will* or *Power*, which is the same thing in a perfect Being, for God doth whatsoever he pleases. These three Properties, *Intellect*, *Wisdom*, *Power*, comprehend the whole Divine *Essence*. God may be particularly and distinctly consider'd with respect to each of these three Properties, and thus being thrice consider'd may be call'd three Persons, according to the original Signification of the word *Person*, which imports a Being consider'd with respect to a certain Capacity or Property. The first Property being the Cause of the second, and the third proceeding from the two former; the first Person is therefore call'd the *Father*, the second the *Son*, the third the *Spirit* that proceeds from the *Father* and *Son*. Thus the Orthodox Expressions are susceptible of a good Sense; and certainly, meaning this Sense by these Terms, it cannot be deny'd but that the Sentiment of the Modalists is true: It is actually true, that there is in God an infinite Understanding, Wisdom, and Will, &c.

And as for the Doctrine of the *Incarnation*, one would think there could be no great difficulty in it, intending thereby, as the Catholic Church doth, that the Divine *Wisdom* so dwelleth in *Christ*, as always to assist, illuminate, conduct and actuate him; *Christ* thus being God, "in respect of the indwelling Divinity, which is in an eminent manner manifested both in and by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as also in respect of his representing God to us, and of his acting in the stead of God, at the Helm of the Universe.

An Apology for the Sentiment of the Modalists; and a Defence of the Natural Terms

I shall defend the Doctrine of the Trinity, not only as it is not many Persons, when these matters are considered in order to understand them, they need not be considered as such, but as a true light, and the Doctrine of the Trinity has been sufficiently cleared, even in the pamphlet intitled, *The Christian's Remains*, p. 8, &c. These Remains are, The Divine Intellect, or Mind, or Understanding, is the Cause of Divine Wisdom; and from both the Divine Intellect and Wisdom do proceed the Divine Will or Power, which is the same thing in a perfect Being, for God doth whatsoever he pleases. These three Properties, Intellect, Wisdom, Power, comprehend the whole Divine Essence. God may be particularly and distinctly consider'd with respect to each of these three Properties, and thus being thrice consider'd may be call'd three Persons, according to the original Signification of the word *Person*, which imports a Being consider'd with respect to a certain Capacity or Property. The first Property being the Cause of the second, and the third proceeding from the two former; the first Person is therefore call'd the Father, the second the Son, the third the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and Son. Thus the Orthodox Expressions are susceptible of a good Sense; and certainly, meaning this Sense by these Terms, it cannot be deny'd but that the Sentiment of the Modalists is true: It is actually true, that there is in God an infinite Understanding, Wisdom, and Will, &c.

And as for the Doctrine of the Incarnation, one would think there could be no great difficulty in it, intending thereby, as the Catholic Church doth, that the Divine Wisdom so dwelleth in Christ, as always to assist, illuminate, conduct and actuate him; Christ thus being God, "in respect of the indwelling Divinity, which is in an eminent manner manifested both in and by our Lord Jesus Christ, as also in respect of his representing God to us, and of his acting in the stead of God, at the Helm of the Universe.

Yet some weighty Objections are here made; as " that this confounds
 " Christ with God, and is the occasion that the Names of Christ are given to
 " God, and Christ is taken to be literally the most High God; as if from a
 " Being's dwelling in a Temple, it follow'd that the House or Temple is lite-
 " rally that Being which dwelleth in it.

Now it is to be observ'd, in answer hereunto, that the Doctrine of the In-
 carnation doth not necessarily confound Christ with God; for all that can
 be understood thereby, agreeably to the System of the Modalists, who are
 generally esteem'd to be the most Orthodox, is, that our Saviour is both *God*
 and the *Man Christ Jesus*, or that the *Man Jesus Christ* and *God* are most emi-
 nently united together in the work of *Salvation*, in that Christ is made the
 Head of the Church and plac'd at the Helm of the Universe, and God con-
 stantly assists and actuates him, to enable him to save those that come to God
 thro him; and thus Christ is evidently *distinguish'd* from God, by Christ pro-
 perly being meant the *Man Jesus*.

Indeed it is very improper to give to God the Names of Christ, as it seems
 to be done in these Invocations, *O Christ hear us, O Son of David have*
mercy upon us, &c. But the Orthodox do readily acknowledg the Incon-
 veniency of these Expressions; *Athanasius* himself declares, that it is always
God, and not the Creature, that is worship'd by the Orthodox, (3d Oration a-
gainst the Arians) so that these Invocations are to be understood as implying
 this Sense, *O thou who dwellest in Christ, or in the Son of David, hear us,*
and have mercy upon us, &c. And undoubtedly it were well, if the said
 Prayers were thus express'd. Most properly the Gospel-Method is to pray
 to the Father in the Name, or thro the Mediation and Intercession of his Son,
 our Lord Jesus Christ; so that after having said in the beginning of the Li-
 tany, *O God our Creator have mercy upon us, O God our Redeemer have mercy*
upon us, O God our Comforter have mercy upon us, it would be most proper
 to address the rest of the Prayer particularly to the Father, who eminently
 sustains the Majesty and Character of the Deity. The ordinary Expres-
 sions that follow from taking another Method, seem often uncouth, and
 much must tacitly be supply'd thereto, not to take them in a wrong Sense,
 as the Vulgar are very apt to do; men of ordinary Capacities not being
 accusom'd to nice Distinctions, and not being able to make any deep Reflec-
 tions of themselves. Besides, it is certain that when the Father is worship'd,
 the whole Deity is worship'd, and our Prayers then cannot be defective or
 imperfect.

As for *Christ's* being or not being the most High God, that is in a great mea-
 sure a *Dispute of Words*. The Deity that dwelleth in Christ, is certainly the
 most High God: If then by *Christ* be meant both the Man Jesus, and the
 Deity that dwelleth in or that constantly assisteth him; no doubt, in that
 sense, Christ is the most High God. But if *Christ* be taken as an Appellation
 peculiar to the Man Jesus, as it seems to be in Scripture; then it is most pro-
 per to say with the Scripture, that in *Christ Jesus dwelleth the Fulness of the*
Godhead: to esteem otherwise, were to assert that an Appellation peculiar
 to the Manhood is peculiar to the Godhead. No body will say that a Man,

as a Man, is literally the most high God; but our Salvation being wrought both by the Man Christ Jesus and God that dwelleth in him, it is certain that our Saviour is both God and Man, as sometime several Men make one Admiral, &c.

Ideas may arbitrarily be join'd to certain Terms, and then those Terms are understood according to those Ideas. Accordingly the Church has us'd the Name *Christ*, to denote both the Man Jesus Christ, and the Deity that manifesteth it self in and by him; and has us'd the Term *Incarnation* to signify the Union of God with Jesus Christ. In that sense the Church saith, that Christ is God, and that God is become Man. But she means to be sure, and ought to mean no more but what may be worded in the Expressions themselves of the Scripture; which Expressions, or the like, in Articles of Communion, are even to be left in that general Sense which they are susceptible of, that every man may be allow'd the Judgment of discerning. These Considerations must be before our eyes, whenever we will give a rational account of the Orthodox System.

It is objected by some, " That, meaning what has been said by the
 " Incarnation, and on that account giving to Christ the Honor and Name
 " of God, the like might be done to other Creatures, which God likewise
 " assists or enables to perform their several Offices, and in and by which God
 " manifests his Wisdom, his Glory and Majesty. (Thus any one of the
 " Prophets might have been said to be God, and God incarnate, for God was
 " with them, and inspir'd them; the Temple of Jerusalem might also, on these
 " Principles, have been said to be God, for God in an extraordinary manner
 " dwelt therein; and the same, in fine, may be said of the Sun and Moon,
 " and the whole World, for therein and thereby God manifests his Wisdom and
 " Glory.) Yet it would certainly be Idolatry, on these or the like accounts, to
 " call any Parts of the World, or any Prophets, or even any Angels or glori-
 " fied Saints, God; and undoubtedly it would be damnable Idolatry, and
 " a Work of the Flesh, to take them for God, and honour them as God: Why
 " then should it not also be reckon'd Idolatry, on this account to call Christ
 " God, and to take him for the most High God, because God dwells with
 " him, assists him, and manifests his Wisdom in him?

If this Difficulty be resolv'd, that is all that the Orthodox need to do, and indeed all they can do. For to pretend a more gross Incarnation than what has been own'd and asserted, would not only be contrary to the Truth, to Reason and Scripture, but would also be a *Petitio Principii*, seeing that incontestably it is not clear and evident, to say no more of it. If any man would lay it down as certainly reveal'd in Scripture, that there are three infinite and divine Spirits (which indeed would be to assert three Gods) and that one of these infinite Spirits is incarnate in a human Body after the grossest manner imaginable, and would make the Belief of this an Article of Communion; he would herein do no better than beg his own Assertion, which is deny'd him, and so would set himself up for the Judg of Controversies, and deny to other Christians their Judgment of discerning. That cannot then and ought not to be our Refuge, in order to resolve the foregoing Difficulty.

And if God is but one Spirit, as the Modalists with good reason assert, there can be no ground left to take the *Incarnation* in a gross Sense. For it cannot be said that this one Spirit is thus grossly incarnate, for then the whole Godhead were incarnate, which is contrary to the Notion of the Orthodox. The Orthodox hold that it is the Divine Wisdom only that is incarnate. The Incarnation therefore can reasonably be taken but to imply what has been said, namely, "That the Divine Wisdom so dwelleth in Christ, as always to assist, illuminate, conduct and actuate him; and that the Divine Majesty is manifested, and is in an extraordinary manner present in Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ representing God to us, and acting in the stead of God at the Helm of the Universe."

This last Particular, which is the very Essence of what is meant by the Incarnation rationally understood, is not in the least taken notice of in the foregoing Objection. The Objection supposes, that by the Incarnation is only meant a *Manifestation* of the Divine Wisdom in, and a *Co-operation* with Christ, or the like. And indeed if it was so, the *Prophets*, the *Temple of Jerusalem*, the *Sun* and *Moon*, and all other *Creatures* which God co-operates with, and in and by which he manifests his Wisdom, might be call'd God, as well as Christ, tho not with altogether so great reason, seeing the Divine Co-operation and Manifestation is greater in Christ than in any other Creature, and may be said in him to be extraordinary. But that which altogether distinguisheth Christ from all other Creatures, which makes the Divine Wisdom and Majesty most extraordinarily present in him, and which may authorize the giving him the Name of the most High God, and the honouring and worshipping the most High God in him, is, That this Man Christ Jesus (in whom dwelleth the Divine Wisdom, or in whom the Divine Wisdom is manifested, and whom the Divine Wisdom always assists, illuminates, conducts and actuates) in a most eminent manner represents God to us, being the Heir of all things, and Lord of Lords, having a Supreme Authority over all Creatures, ruling and governing all things under God, and acting in the stead of God at the Helm of the Universe, all things being subjected unto him by God's Decree. It is God's own Authority and Majesty that he is invested with. He may therefore be said to be God in that respect, and this Divine Majesty and Authority may be ador'd in him.

This Consideration was altogether overlook'd in the Objection; and yet this Article (that all Power is committed to Christ, that he represents God to us, or is God's Vicegerent, and acts in the stead of God at the Helm of the Universe) is not and cannot be deny'd by any that receive the Holy Scripture as their Rule. Herein therefore we are not guilty of any *Petitio Principii*. We mean neither more nor less than all those must needs mean, and do actually mean, who own the Scripture. We do not therefore take away from any body the Judgment of discerning. We do not act as if we were to be, and as if we were actually magisterial Judges of Controversies. We insist only on what is clear and undeniable.

It may perhaps be said, "That tho Christ be invested with Supreme Authority over all Creatures, yet his Authority is not absolutely Supreme like that"

" that of God, seeing *he is himself subject* to God ; and it is not plain and
 " undeniable that ever the Scripture expressly calls Christ the most High
 " God, or expressly orders that Christ should be look'd upon as the most
 " High God : the Modalists therefore cannot enjoin that Practice, or the
 " use of such Expressions, without violating *the Gospel-Terms of Communion*,
 " or without setting themselves up as magisterial Judges of Contro-
 " versies, and without taking from others the Judgment of discerning,
 " &c.

Now, in answer to this, it cannot be deny'd but that we should all keep
 to the Expressions and general Sense of Scripture. It is *the Sentiment* it self
 of the Modalists which I vindicate, and not any thing else. I have shewn,
 that the Modalists *mean* neither more nor less than all those do, who receive
 the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. If any do scruple the use of
 any unscriptural Expressions, God forbid that I should appear as an
 Adversary against them. But this only I say with *Athanasius*, that we
 do not worship the Creature, but that it is God we worship in Christ.

Thus to use a Comparison, tho somewhat imperfect, the Queen's Majesty
 is honour'd in her Viceroy in *Ireland*. As long as the Viceroy doth truly
 discharge his Office according to his Commission, he truly bears the Cha-
 racter of, and truly represents the Royal Authority. It would be impertinent to
 dispute, whether then the Viceroy's Authority be truly the Supreme Autho-
 rity it self. Indeed the Man himself is subject to another, but so is not the
 Authority by which he acts: Certainly the Authority by which he acts is the
 Supreme Authority, and therefore the Supreme Authority ought to be re-
 spected in him. Here perhaps men may differ in the manner of expressing
 themselves; but yet all those who acknowledg the Queen's Authority, and
 who therefore obey her Viceroy's Commands, according to her Will ex-
 press'd in the Commission, cannot but actually agree in the thing, and mean
 actually the same thing. This Comparison, how imperfect soever it be, doth
 in a sufficient measure illustrate the matter before us. We may say, that
 Christ is the most High God ; but by this his Supreme Godhead meaning the
 Divine Authority that appears in him, we say no more than what others mean,
 when they express themselves in other Terms, namely, that in him dwells the
 Fulness of the Godhead.

God will not indeed have his Glory be given to another ; neither do we
 ascribe Divinity but to God himself : For still the Authority by which Christ
 acts, is God's own Authority ; and we do not of our own accord, or with-
 out God's warrant, assert it to be in Christ. Now when God says he will
 not give his Glory to another, the meaning visibly is this, that he wills
 not that Men of themselves, and according to their own Fancies, should dis-
 pose of the Honour and Glory that is due to him. As for God himself, he
 may communicate of his own without doing any wrong ; and his meaning
 was not that he never would thus communicate himself, he has not ty'd his
 own hands ; the question was not what himself might do, but what his Crea-
 tures were not to presume of themselves to do. Thus the Queen of *England*
 may say she will not give her Glory to another, and yet she may order the
 same.

same Honors to be paid to her Viceroy which are only due to her, which indeed terminate on her Majesty wherever they are paid according to her Order, but which could not lawfully be render'd to her in the Person of him who is her Viceroy, before her Declaration of her Will and Pleasure in this matter and the delivering of the Viceroy's Commission. Notwithstanding this saying of God, that he will not give his Glory to another, the Orthodox believe that he has given himself and so his Glory to the Man Christ Jesus. Howbeit, after all it is certain God has but so given his Glory to Jesus Christ, as that it still remains his own Glory, and the said Glory after all truly is ascrib'd to and terminates on God.

Tho God's Lieutenant, inasmuch as he represents God to us, be term'd God, because the Supreme Authority he appears invested with is God's own Authority; yet it cannot truly be said that we make a Creature God, or hold one for God that is only a Creature: for it is God or the Divine Majesty and Supreme Authority we consider and adore in Jesus Christ, for in Jesus Christ dwelleth the Fulness of the Godhead; and when we say that Jesus Christ is God, we mean it in respect of the Deity, or the Divine Wisdom, Majesty and Authority that dwell in him. If any think it not so proper upon that account to call Christ the most High God, it is true it would be most proper to content our selves to say with the Scripture, that the Fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in the Man Christ Jesus. Howbeit, the Deity that dwelleth in the Man Christ Jesus, and is communicated to him as has been said, is truly and properly the most High God, or the Majesty, Wisdom and Supreme Authority of the most High God; and that is all we mean by the Orthodox Expressions, but we do not intend that it is the Creature that is the most High God.

But (to prove that it is *Idolatry* to call Christ God, and to honour him as God, upon the account that God dwelleth in him by the Manifestation of his Wisdom in and by him, and on the account that God constantly assisteth him in the discharge of his Office of representing God and acting in the stead of God at the Helm of the Universe) some urge, "That it would be *reasonable* to give the Name of the Sovereign to the Viceroy, on any account whatsoever, whether upon the account of representing, or upon the account of being upheld by the Sovereign, or upon the account of the Sovereign's Majesty appearing and dwelling in him, &c.

To this I shall reply thus much. In that case the fault would be only in the *Expression*, but not in the *Sentiment* it self; and so this would be only a *Controversy of Words*. And besides, there is this difference in the present Comparison, that in an earthly Sovereign, who is a finite and imperfect Being, the Sovereign's Wisdom, Majesty and Authority are different from the Sovereign's own Person; but it is an Axiom of Divines, *That every thing in God is God*, and it is upon this Axiom that it is said that Christ is God, upon the account that the Divine Wisdom and Majesty in a supreme degree appear and dwell in him; or else by Christ we mean both the Man Jesus Christ, and the Divine Wisdom and Majesty that dwell in him.

Howbeit,

Howbeit, as to the Practice of honouring Christ as God, that is countenanc'd by the Example of the Viceroy's being honour'd like the Sovereign. In the Person of the Viceroy the Sovereign is honour'd; and the Scripture likewise commands, that every Knee should bow to Christ *to the Glory of God*. The Viceroy in publick Solemnities wherein he represents the Sovereign, might be address'd unto, as being the Sovereign upon the account of the Sovereign's Authority by which he acts, and which is present in him or dwells in him, whilst he discharges his Office: If that were usual, it would not at all seem strange or unreasonable.

There is yet this difference in the said Comparison, that an earthly Viceroy may prove a Rebel, but this cannot be said of Christ. We are sure that Christ's Laws are God's Laws, Christ's Kingdom is God's Kingdom, Christ's Majesty is God's Majesty.

Christ doth not require of us any Services that are carnal or vicious, and that may be term'd *Works of the Flesh*, as did the Pagan Gods. The Gods of the Heathens were worship'd by the Slaughter of human Sacrifices, by Prostitutions, and by other corrupt and immoral Practices. Christ commands us to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, and directs us to ask all things of God in his name, or as his Disciples, and for his sake. And the Orthodox declare, that this is all they intend to do, howsoever they express themselves. What *Idolatriy* then, or what *Work of the Flesh* is here?

There can be suppos'd, one would think, but an Impropriety of Speech, in saying that the Man Jesus Christ is truly and properly the most High God, meaning that the most High God, or the Divine Wisdom, Majesty and Supreme Authority do truly and properly appear in him. Howbeit, the *Meaning and Sentiment* of the Modalists is certainly good. And now the Result of all that has been said, seems to be as followeth.

1. That some Persons may condescend to the use of unscriptural Terms.
2. That others, who are no less sincere, may scruple the use of them.
3. That those, on whom it is incumbent, should establish the *Scriptural* or *Gospel Terms of Union*.

1. *Some Persons may condescend to the Use of unscriptural Expressions.* For this the Reader may be refer'd to the Half-sheet that is intitled, *The Scripturalists Christian Condescension consider'd*. The Reasons of this Condescension are, that it seems the Orthodox Expressions may in some measure be taken in a Latitudinarian Sense, and that whatsoever admits of a tolerable Construction, tho otherwise uncouth and unscriptural, may be submitted to for Peace sake, till Men at least may have had the time and means to be better inform'd, and whilst the Gospel-Terms of Communion are not yet sufficiently known. Those who are persuaded of the Validity of these Reasons, may use this Condescension, tho on the other hand they believe, that the unscriptural Expressions are extremely improper, and subject to great Inconveniences. They may study to take these Expressions in a good sense, that they may use them with Devotion: But seeing it is *Necessity* in great part, in this case, that justifies their Compliance, they ought not to affect the use of them more than needs must; and surely they ought not so to plead for the unscriptural Terms,

Terms, as to give them the preference before the Terms of Scripture, or as to condemn them that scruple the Use of unscriptural Expressions. They ought not to accommodate themselves to unscriptural Expressions out of worldly Interest, or that they may enjoy Ease and Pleasure in this World, (that were certainly to be in a state of Damnation) but that they may labour more usefully, and may be in a greater Capacity to promote the Truth. They ought therefore to embrace all occasions to do this, and they ought to do it zealously and strenuously, if they will save their Souls. 'Tis wonderful indeed how Men generally are wanting in what they might do for the Truth! But yet, all charitable Condescension notwithstanding, they ought not to be asham'd of or to deny the Truth, but must be ready, if occasion be, to sacrifice even themselves for the Truth's sake. A Man that writes *Institutions* concerning the Orthodox Doctrines, may profess that the *Dissent and Controversy (on both sides)* is only from a *Misapprehension of one another's Sense and Meaning*, &c. Thus some Persons may conscientiously condescend to the use of unscriptural Terms.

2. Others, who are no less sincere, may scruple the Use of these Expressions. They may think them passable in Articles of Peace, but doubt whether they are reverent enough in public Acts of Religion. They may fear that it is too uncouth to say, *O Son of David* have Mercy on us, meaning, *O God who dwellest in the Son of David* have Mercy on us, &c. Especially seeing how those who stretch the Christian Condescension so far, are accus'd of Hypocrisy by some Writers, they are loth to appear obnoxious to so foul an Aspersion. Besides, they may reckon that Men have had sufficient time to consider and bethink themselves; and seeing that all this while they have not seriously apply'd themselves to the means of Information in a matter of this vast moment, or have slighted and have not at all regarded all that has been written, they may think that they ought to go out from among them, and look on them as Men that are resolv'd to shut up the Key of Knowledg.

3. Those, on whom it is incumbent, should establish the Scriptural or Gospel Terms of Union. This is particularly made out in the *Irenicum Magnum*, in a Sheet concerning *Subscriptions to Articles of Communion*, and another intitled, *The Consequences of the Modalists System*. This Temperament of Scriptural Terms is us'd in our Liturgy, with respect to the Questions concerning Predestination. It would not be more difficult to content our selves with the general Terms of Scripture in all other respects. If we do it not, we leave Stones of stumbling in the way, we needlessly cause Divisions and are guilty of Schism, and contradict the fundamental Principles of Protestants. We reproach the Scripture, as if it were not a perfect or sufficient Rule. We leave not to others the Liberty of discerning. We act as if we were infallible. We set up our selves as magisterial Judges of Controversies. We exercise Dominion over other mens Faith. We oppress mens Consciences, and endanger their Salvation. In fine, we take away the Key of Knowledg, and run the hazard of crushing the Truth, and of being found violently to fight against God.